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Expiration of the Farm Bill: What Effects Will its Lapse Have? (/full-blog/2013/10/expiration-of-farm-bill-what-effects.html)



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By: John Bishop, Staff Member

Overshadowed by the looming government shutdown, the “Food, Conservation, and Energy act of 2008” or “Farm Bill” is set to expire on October 1, 2013.[1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn1) The Farm Bill provides the statutory basis for crop subsidies, food stamps, and free and reduced school lunch programs.[2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn2) Its lapse, however, is much more of a paper tiger than a farmer’s doomsday.

With a bill of such important (and costly) subject matter, many are left scratching their heads at Congress’s apparent lethargy in passing a new one. If the bill expires, won’t the important programs therein be cut? Not exactly: the Farm Bill has a built-in safety net. When the current Farm Bill lapses, the law will revert to the 1949 “permanent law.”[3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn3) Moreover, most of the major reversions would not take effect until January 1, 2014, granting additional time for legislators to present a new Farm Bill to the President.[4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn4) Both houses of Congress are already working on a revised 2013 Farm Bill.[5]

Although the expiring Farm Bill is making headlines, farmers may feel like they are experiencing Farm Bill “déjà vu.” This year, 2013, is not the first time legislators have run out of time on passing a new Farm Bill. In fact, the last three Farm Bills have been passed well beyond the September 30 expiration date.[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftn6) Doomsdayers’ prophecies about skyrocketing prices of milk and other commodities are probably better described as just “crying over spilled milk.” Congress will more than likely approve an acceptable 2013 Farm Bill before disastrous effects set in.

[1] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf1) Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, PL 110-234, May 22, 2008, 122 Stat 923.

[2] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf2) The 2008 Farm Bill Side-By-Side Comparison,

<http://webarchives.cdlib.org/sw1vh5dg3r/http://ers.usda.gov/FarmBill/2008/> (<http://webarchives.cdlib.org/sw1vh5dg3r/http://ers.usda.gov/FarmBill/2008/>) (last visited Sept. 30, 2013).

[3] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf3) What an expiring Farm Bill means to you, Think Forward Blog (Sept. 19, 2012),

<http://www.iarp.org/blog/201209/what-an-expiring-farm-bill-means-to-you> (<http://www.iarp.org/blog/201209/what-an-expiring-farm-bill-means-to-you>).

[4] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf4) Id.

[5] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf5) See Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013 (S. 954), Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013 (H.R. 1947).

[6] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ftnf6) Ryan Holeywell, The Farm Bill Expires This Week. Does it Matter?, FedWatch (Sept. 26, 2012),

<http://www.governing.com/blog/fedwatch/gov-the-farm-bill-expires-next-week-does-it-matter.html> (<http://www.governing.com/blog/fedwatch/gov-the-farm-bill-expires-next-week-does-it-matter.html>).

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40508 (859) 257-4747 BLOG.KJEANRL@GMAIL.COM ([MAILTO:BLOG.KJEANRL@GMAIL.COM](mailto:BLOG.KJEANRL@GMAIL.COM))